



U.S. ARMY SPECIAL FORCES
COMMAND (AIRBORNE)
BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

U.S. ARMY SPECIAL FORCES COMMAND PUBLIC AFFAIRS OFFICE
FORT BRAGG, NC 28310 / (910) 432-4587 / <http://news.soc.mil>

COLONEL (RET.) ROBERT L. HOWARD
Died December 23, 2009

Colonel Robert L. Howard was born on July 11, 1939 in Opelika, Ala. He entered military service on July 20, 1956 in Montgomery, Ala., following in the footsteps of his father and four uncles who had served with airborne units in World War II. He was medically retired on Sept. 30, 1992. He lived his last few years in San Antonio, Texas. While serving with 5th Special Forces Group, he received a direct appointment from master sergeant to first lieutenant in December 1969. His 36 years of military service included more than 33 years on airborne status.

He participated in two movies concerning airborne and special operations missions, both featuring John Wayne. He made a parachute jump on the filming of *The Longest Day* and as an Airborne Instructor in *The Green Berets*.

Military assignments include duty with the 82nd and 101st Airborne Divisions; 2nd Ranger Battalion; 3rd, 5th, and 6th Special Forces Group; 5th Infantry Division; 7th Corps, XVIII Airborne Corps. He served in the Eighth United States Army and Combined Forces Command. Service in Vietnam included serving with 1st Bn., 327th Airborne Infantry, 1st Brigade, 101st Airborne Division and Special Forces. He was the post commander of Kelly Barracks, Stuttgart, Germany, executive officer of the 2nd Ranger Battalion, and the Mountain Ranger Camp.

Howard served a total of five tours in Vietnam. As an NCO, Howard served as a demolitions sergeant. While with Special Forces, he served the majority of his time with Military Assistance Command, Vietnam – Studies and Observations Group out of Kontum. During his 58 months of combat, he was wounded fourteen times. Between 1968 and 1969, he was put in for three Medals of Honor. The first nomination was downgraded to Distinguished Service Cross and third to a Silver Star.

President Nixon presented the Medal of Honor to him on March 2, 1971.

Colonel Howard was a distinguished honor graduate of the Ranger Course, Pathfinder Course, and Parachute Rigger School. He received the Outstanding Infantryman's Trophy as Outstanding Infantry Officer of Class 1979-1980 at the Command and General Staff College. He graduated from the National War College, Class 1987-1988. His military service also contributed to exceptional civilian recognition for service to his nation. He received the Outstanding Youngman of America award 1970; nominated as one of ten Outstanding Youngmen in America in 1971 and 1972; inducted into Military Hall of Fame, Hoover Institute, Stanford University in 1980, inducted into Military Hall of Fame, Veterans of Foreign Wars, State of Alabama in 1973; Promoted to



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Colonel for Life in 1976 by Alabama State Governor George Wallace and the Alabama State Militia.

His awards and decorations include the Medal of Honor, Distinguished Service Cross, Silver Star, Bronze Star for Valor (three awards), Purple Heart (eight awards), Defense Superior Service Medal, Legion of Merit (three awards), Air Medal for Valor (two awards), Army Commendation Medal for Valor (three awards), Army Meritorious Service Medal (two awards), Joint Service Commendation Medal, Joint Service Achievement Medal, Army Good Conduct Medal (four awards), National Defense Service Medal, Armed Forces Reserve Medal, NCO Professional Development Ribbon, Army Overseas Ribbon, Army Service Ribbon, Expeditionary Medal, Vietnam Service Medal, Vietnamese Cross of Gallantry with Gold, Silver and Bronze Stars, Vietnam Honor Medal (two awards), Vietnamese Wound Medal, Vietnamese Civil Action Medal (two awards) Army Presidential Unit Citation, Navy Valorous Unit Citation, Army Meritorious Unit Citation, Vietnamese Cross of Gallantry with Palm, Republic of Korea Samil Medal, Combat Infantryman's Badge, Aircraft Crewman's Badge, Master Parachutist Badge, Pathfinder Badge, Air Assault Badge, Expert infantryman's Badge, Vietnamese Ranger Badge, Army Ranger Tab and Special Forces Tab.

After retirement from military service in 1992, Colonel Bob Howard was employed by the Department of Veterans Affairs. He retired in January 2006 after 52 years of government service.

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